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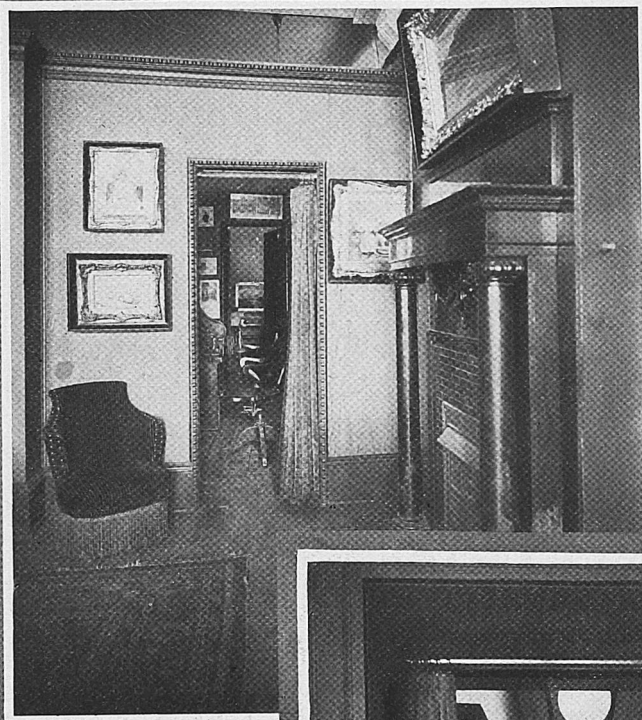
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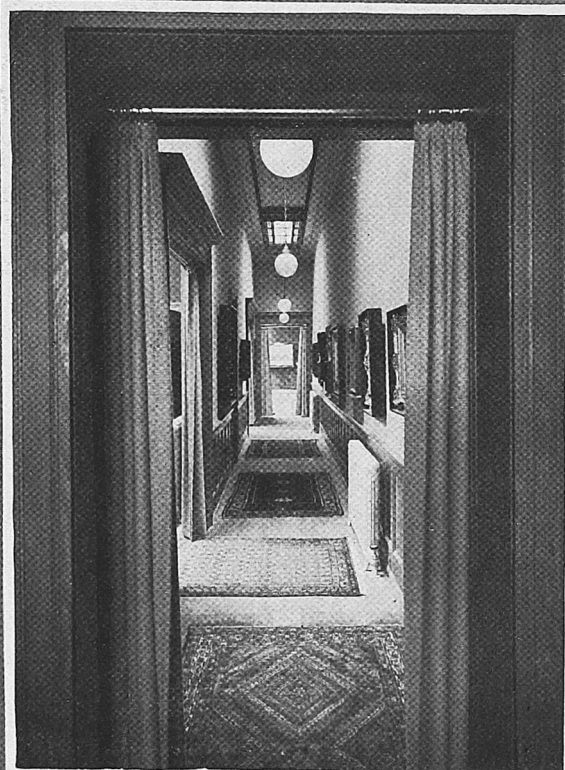
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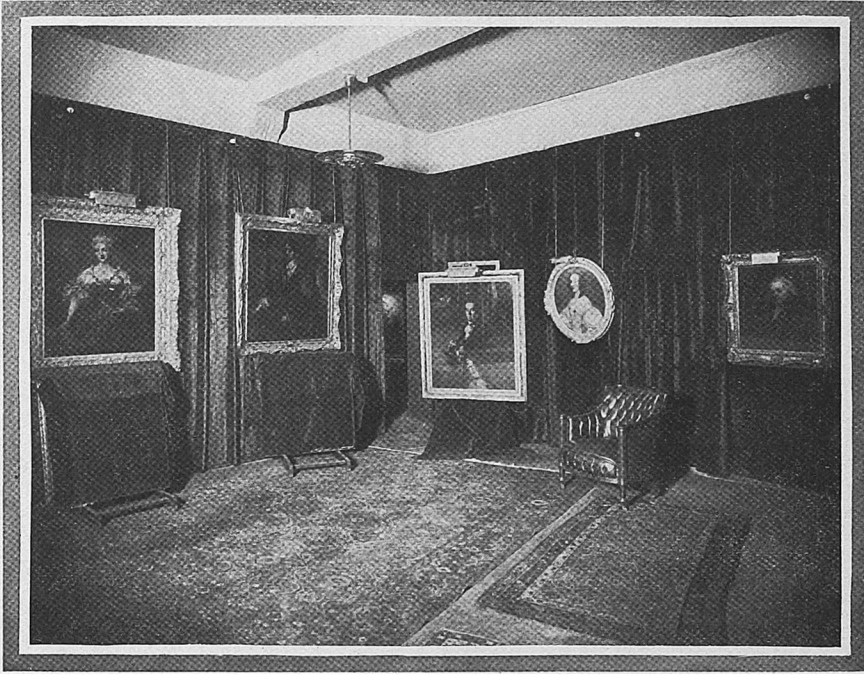
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VIEWS IN THE MOULTON & RICKETTS GALLERIES
AT CHICAGO AT MILWAUKEE



A VIEW IN THE MOULTON & RICKETTS GALLERIES AT CHICAGO

Development of Art in the West

Evelyn Marie Stuart



EVER since the beginning of time has any country witnessed so rapid a development, from wilderness and savagery to the highest enlightenment, as has this continent in its short history. The growth and development of the West in particular is the marvel of the civilized world. This, however, is not so remarkable as it is obvious when one considers that America has had, in addition to its own natural resources, all the civilization of the world to draw from, so that much of its development has been a mere transplantation of culture to a wider field and a more fertile soil.

With the material welfare of a land and its people well established culture comes naturally as the final expression of humanity's desire for a complete life, rounded into beauty and symmetry by the fine arts. The development of art, therefore, is at first a matter of acquisition of older works rather than of producing newer ones representative of the new

country and its history and civilization. Soon, however, the example of the masters of the past proves an inspiration to coming talent, and the development of art appreciation leads to the development of artists.

Long before the rise of the public gallery, which shall create and foster this inspiration, the private collector has begun to feel the need of art in his life, and for his æsthetic development has started to acquire those things which shall satisfy his soul's hunger for the beautiful. With Americans the first tendency was naturally to turn to Europe for works of art, and the earliest collections were thus started with pictures picked up upon trips abroad. Soon, however, the increase in appreciation of the artistic, and also in wealth, which makes possible the ownership of works of art, led to the rise of the American gallery and the American dealer. With the steady growth of American industry and the increase in the number of private fortunes art collections have multiplied on every hand until the amount of money expended upon them has reached such proportions as to make the business of the art dealer of much importance in the commerce as well as the culture of the nation.

Indeed, recently in the United States the transfer and sale of works of art has reached such proportions that it has called for institutions and energies undreamed of a few decades ago, when the values then dealt in were small compared with the volume of such interests to-day. Particularly is this true in the West, and in Chicago, the metropolis of the West. Formerly there was in the minds of collectors in this section an opinion that it was necessary to visit older communities in order to see things which would be in keeping with their usual purchases in Europe. Chicago is to-day, however, in a position that is less dependent upon the older art centers as a source of supply, her dealers being able to secure the best of the art treasures that are offered in European markets.

This comes about in a way that suggests much romance, for it is a fact, though not widely known, that works by the masters of the last century have long since passed out of the hands of the dealers abroad, and that it is much easier for American firms, especially Western ones, to secure these masterpieces from their private owners. Old European families whom necessity forces to part with the art treasures of their race, are much more willing to sell to American than to foreign dealers, feeling that the transaction is less liable to become known among their intimate circle of friends and acquaintances. They realize, also, that there is a market for such things in the great Middle West, and are glad to deal directly with reliable Chicago dealers. Representatives of these concerns are likewise very aggressive in locating choice examples of high art that may be purchased from such owners. Their European agents keep in constant touch with people who are known to have such works of art in their collections.

This accounts for the inability of Americans traveling abroad to any longer pick up really valuable pictures, for the best things are immediately

secured when offered for sale by the dealers' agents, who are always on the ground. Thus only the less important works are left in the market to tempt the traveling American, who is usually led to pay as high a price for them as his home dealer would ask for the best examples of the same artist.

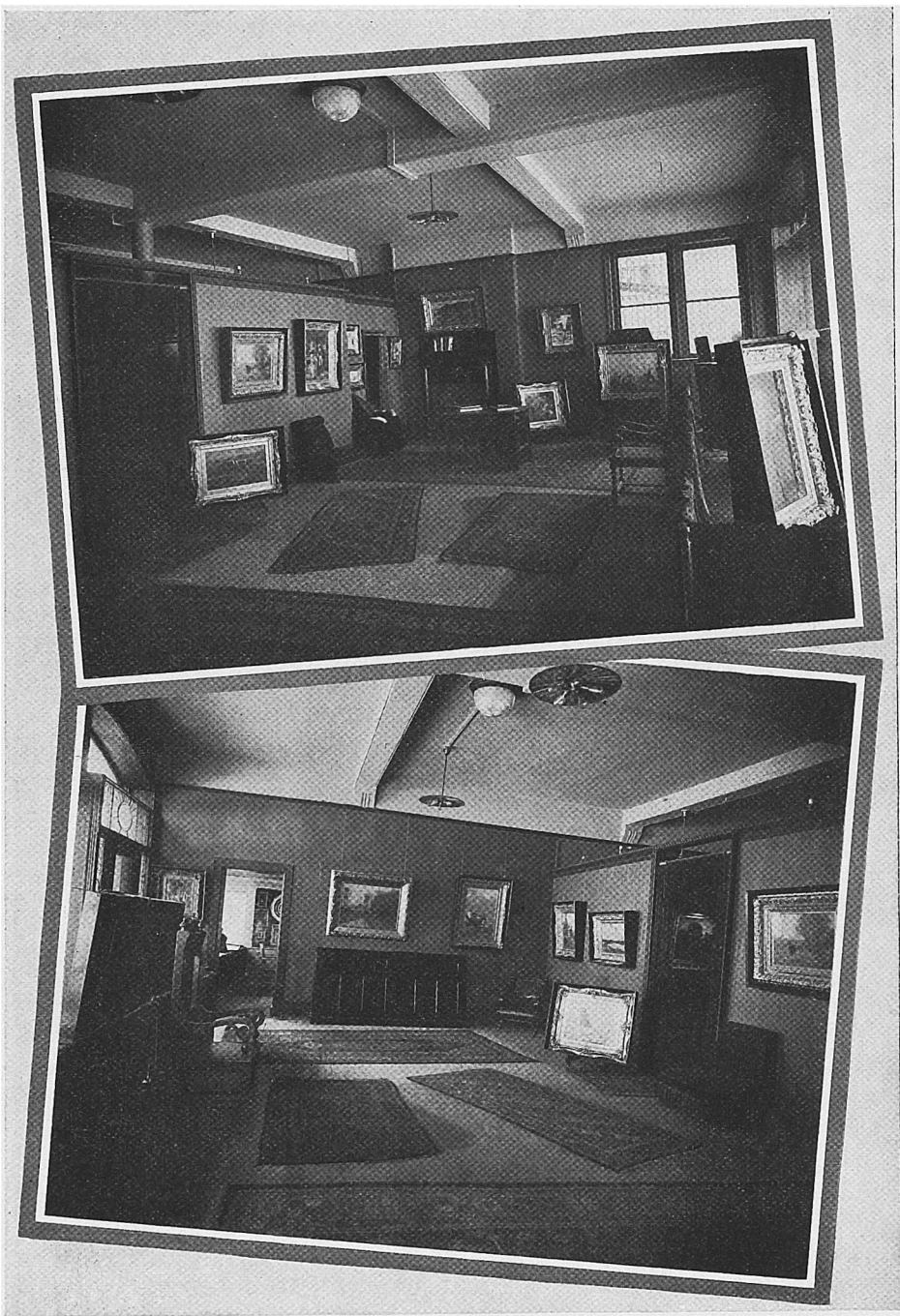
It explains also why so many of the most critical collectors buy their pictures at home for even though they travel in Europe annually, they find by deferring these purchases until their homecoming that they secure choicer works on more favorable terms.

Between collector and dealer there often exists an understanding which is most favorable to the interests of the former, for the dealer may assist the development of his patron's taste and knowledge of art and spare him much costly experiment, such as usually attends the foundation of a collection. Unless exceptionally gifted by nature with a rare taste the would-be buyer of paintings must go through a period of education during which he will inevitably make mistaken purchases. The usual tendency at first is to buy the merely pleasing and decorative things, which, when well executed, serve their purpose in training the owner's appreciation for higher steps. The reliable dealer who has such a patron sells him the decorative thing with the privilege of returning it when he has grown beyond it and wishes to buy the really worthy thing representative of the best in art.

Moulton and Ricketts, the well-known art dealers of Chicago and Milwaukee, have one such picture which has been thus sold and returned many times. It is a seeming primer of art education that has paved the way for a fuller appreciation with many a collector. The conscientious dealer would always prefer to sell a patron a true work of art, but appreciation is a thing that must grow and it cannot be forced into a full and discriminating perfection. It rests with the dealer to sell the best example of the kind of work that his patron can appreciate and wait for the growth of a taste which shall lead him, when wearying of it, to return it and demand something better—the kind of picture that he can live with and that shall add something to his life—a work capable of creating emotion.

As a rule, the picture of real depth does not appeal to the tyro. Not a small proportion of the human race are in the position of the friend who once said to Whistler, "Really I see nothing in your pictures," and to whom the great artist and wit responded, "I know you don't, but don't you wish you did?"

The unlearned in art incline usually toward the pretty picture which is meaningless, or the picture which tells a story and is valuable as an illustration rather than as art; or to the dull yet conscientious picture which is a mere photographic reproduction of nature. They are not gifted with the fine discrimination of Whistler, who remarked in this latter connection: "Nature contains the elements in color and form of all pictures as the keyboard contains the notes of all music, but the artist is



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born to pick and choose and group with science these elements that the result may be beautiful—as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he brings forth from chaos glorious harmony. To say to the painter that nature is to be taken as she is is to say to the player that he may sit on the piano.

To teach the man who is struggling toward the light to see artistically and to see aright is not the least of the dealer's many uses.

In yet another sense the collector learns to rely upon the intelligent and reputable dealer for only the man who makes a life study of the works of different artists may know at what period their best works were produced. Genius may flower early and as early fade, so that the first efforts of the painter are his best, and his latter of less value, as in the case of Ziem. Or it may be of slower and surer growth, as with Wiessenbruch, whose greater physical strength and outdoor life having preserved his energies render the works of his later years among his best.

Even with the greatest artists there is a variation in the quality of their work at different periods. Success sometimes works disaster to the talent of even a great man by removing the stimulus to high endeavor, as Professor Holmes of Oxford has remarked in a recent work on "The Science of Picture Making," wherein he observes:

"The artist runs into the most acute peril the moment he has nothing to struggle against. That is the real trouble of those who practice art with success. The stimulus to do battle for their convictions is removed and their works which should be the outcome of a constant effort to conquer adverse circumstances become an easy routine. The example of Millais is notorious, both because his original talent was so wonderful and because when tempted by wealth and popularity he lost not only the creative energy which inspired his early designs, but even his mastery over his materials. His later works are as cheap in execution as they are in sentiment."

To gather for his patrons not only the works of the best artists, but the best works, is the duty and delight of the dealer who wishes to build a high reputation upon a solid foundation of true service. American collectors are as a rule, men of large affairs, whose time is reckoned in dollars, and whose huge commercial interests forbid much leisure to ransack the world for art treasures. The dealer must know his patron and his taste and have ready for his inspection collections of worthy things that it shall repay his time to view. So successful are many dealers in this line that they know when a picture is offered for sale in Europe what collection it shall grace in America. Some collectors rely upon their dealers to purchase for them examples of the works of their favorite artists, wherever they may be able to secure them, trusting to their integrity, taste and ability to judge of the value of a painting. Inasmuch as the true artist also is seldom a man of affairs and is generally unconscious of the workings of the commercial world and unable to market his

product successfully, the dealer becomes a friend to artist and art lover alike. In Europe the artist deals always through his manager. In America the dealer may assume the manager's place. The artist who shows facility in selling his pictures not infrequently exhibits carelessness in the making of them.

In yet another way the development of art in any section depends as much upon an enlightened commercialism as upon any disinterested and altruistic efforts by private individuals or public organizations. Much of all the preliminary educational work along the line of a general uplift of the taste of the masses must of necessity fall to the lot of the art galleries of a community. Perhaps the mere matter of equipment in itself decides this direction of the movement. For has not the gallery the capital, the space, the facilities for procuring and exhibiting real works of art and the force of trained minds with true and cultured taste to make possible effective work in art education? Of Western galleries this has been particularly true, for there is a broad spirit of helpfulness about the West that permeates its every business and social institution, that mingles public spirit with all private enterprise, which after all must benefit the public if it would attain to the height of permanent prosperity.

The prime factor in the making of an art center from any of our centers of commerce is then the art dealers and the interest in art which they can create and foster. Here the man of means may secure intelligent guidance in his buying. Here the rich in appreciation only are welcome as guests to enjoy what they may possess only in appreciation. Here the artist possessed of real genius finds a patron and a friend.

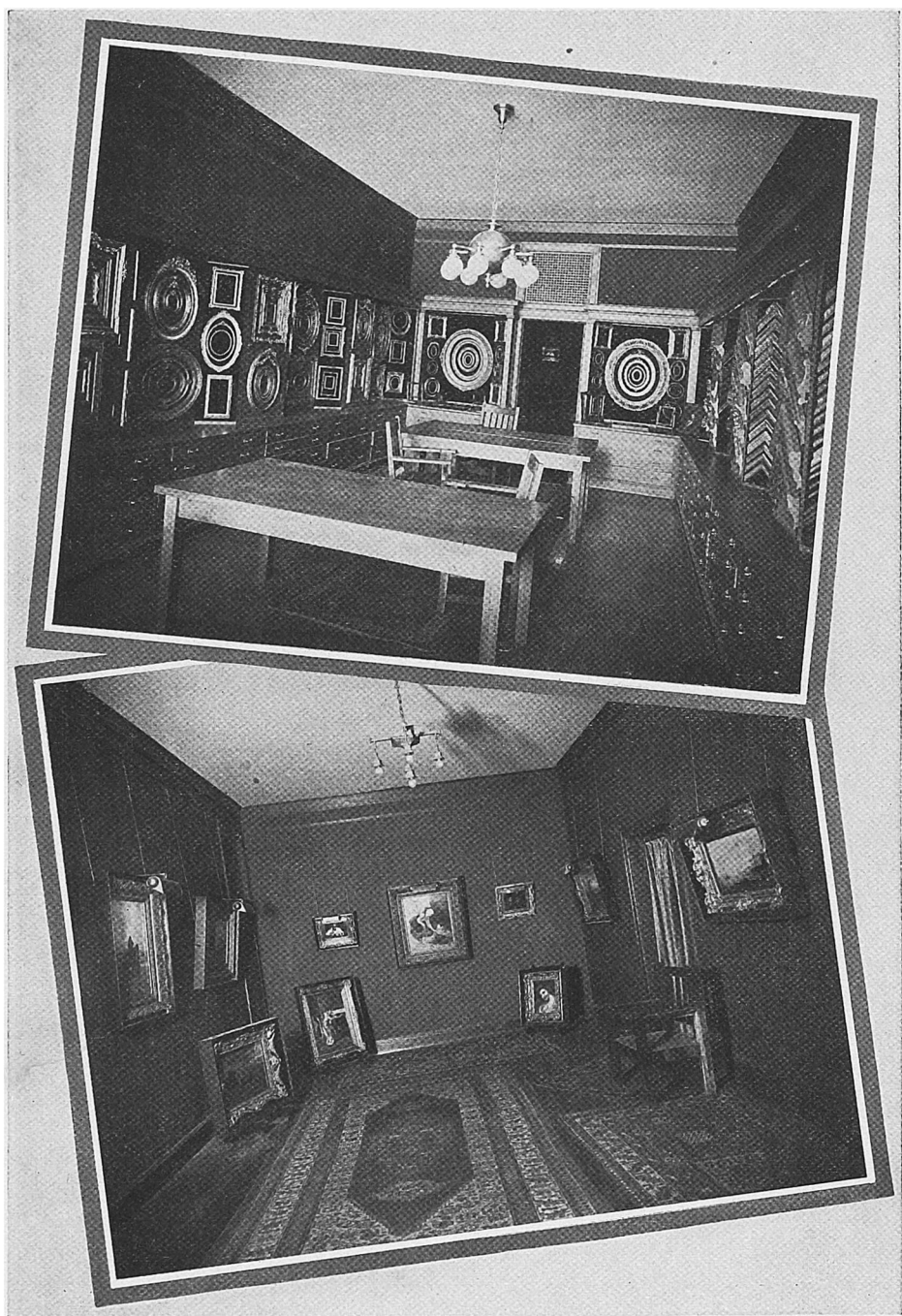
But perhaps the most fruitful field of endeavor open to the progressive gallery is that of exhibition work in the larger towns and cities surrounding a metropolis. Here the representative gallery and the woman's club or school board, may work together in harmony for the betterment of their kind, the club or school board suggesting or inviting an exhibition, and the gallery arranging the plans and bringing to the city an interesting and instructive collection. To women's clubs everywhere the culture of a community most appropriately falls, for American men are, as a rule, too busy with the practical to promote the æsthetic. The wife of the busy man with her abundant leisure may well turn to club work as a means of utilizing for the benefit of the community that great energy she has inherited from empire-building forefathers. Here the educated cultured woman, removed from the necessity of earning a living, finds a field of actual usefulness to society in the large sense outside her home and her immediate circle of intimates. She becomes a natural missionary of culture and higher civilization through the club lecture and art exhibitions.

Progressive art dealers are glad to lend a hand in this work, and even go further, independently conducting most interesting exhibitions open to the general public. In this connection no dealer in this country has done more for the advancement of this form of art education than

have Moulton & Ricketts. At their new galleries at Milwaukee, they have set aside the largest and finest apartment as a public exhibition room, where important collections will be on view each month, of interest both to the collector and to the general public. Art critics of standing will deliver afternoon and evening lectures on these occasions for the benefit of those who attend. This action upon the part of a representative art dealer is progressive in the extreme and cannot fail to be of interest in this community, especially as the Layton Gallery, which in Milwaukee corresponds to our Art Institute, does not, like it, hold exhibitions of the works of contemporary artists; and, in fact, permits no picture to be hung which has not been purchased by the museum. In this way it has heretofore been impossible for citizens to view a representative collection of the works of any one man. The inauguration of these exhibitions comes as a logical climax of a long campaign of education along similar lines, for which Moulton & Ricketts have in the past achieved a reputation through the notable exhibitions which they have conducted in Chicago and all of the most important cities of the Middle West.

These exhibitions have met with the enthusiastic appreciation of the art lovers of the different cities, though at first discouragements attended the work. The time, however, is now past when important collections brought to a city fail of arousing general interest. Indeed the people of cities so favored have grown to regard these exhibitions as events of the year and to look forward with pleased expectancy to their coming. In one city of 35,000 25 per cent of the entire population attended one of these exhibitions. During all such events certain days are set apart for the attendance of public school children, whose presence in large numbers is one of the inspiring features of this work which promises so much for the future.

As these dealers have taken so active a part in this form of art education it is quite fitting that some passing notice be given their gallery in Milwaukee, which is worthy of comment in itself, occupying, as it does, a prominent place among such institutions in America. Its handsome front of Greek architecture, in red brick and cream stone, with tiling and bronze door posts in antique green finish, suggests at once its artistic purposes. The interior arrangement is particularly pleasing as well as practical. A hall runs almost the full length from the main reception room in front past the two private galleries opening from it to the public reception room in the rear. The main reception room is finished in soft, grayish tan burlap, with woodwork in Japanese oak, and a ceiling of ivory tone, from the corners of which depend green bronze lighting fixtures with globes of opalescent glass. The hall carries out this effect, and the first small gallery and office is done in green burlap and oak with paneled skylight ceiling of glass set in a carved oak fret work. The private gallery back of it opening off the hall is hung in soft-toned green velour and furnished in harmonious shades of green. It, too, has a skylight ceiling, as



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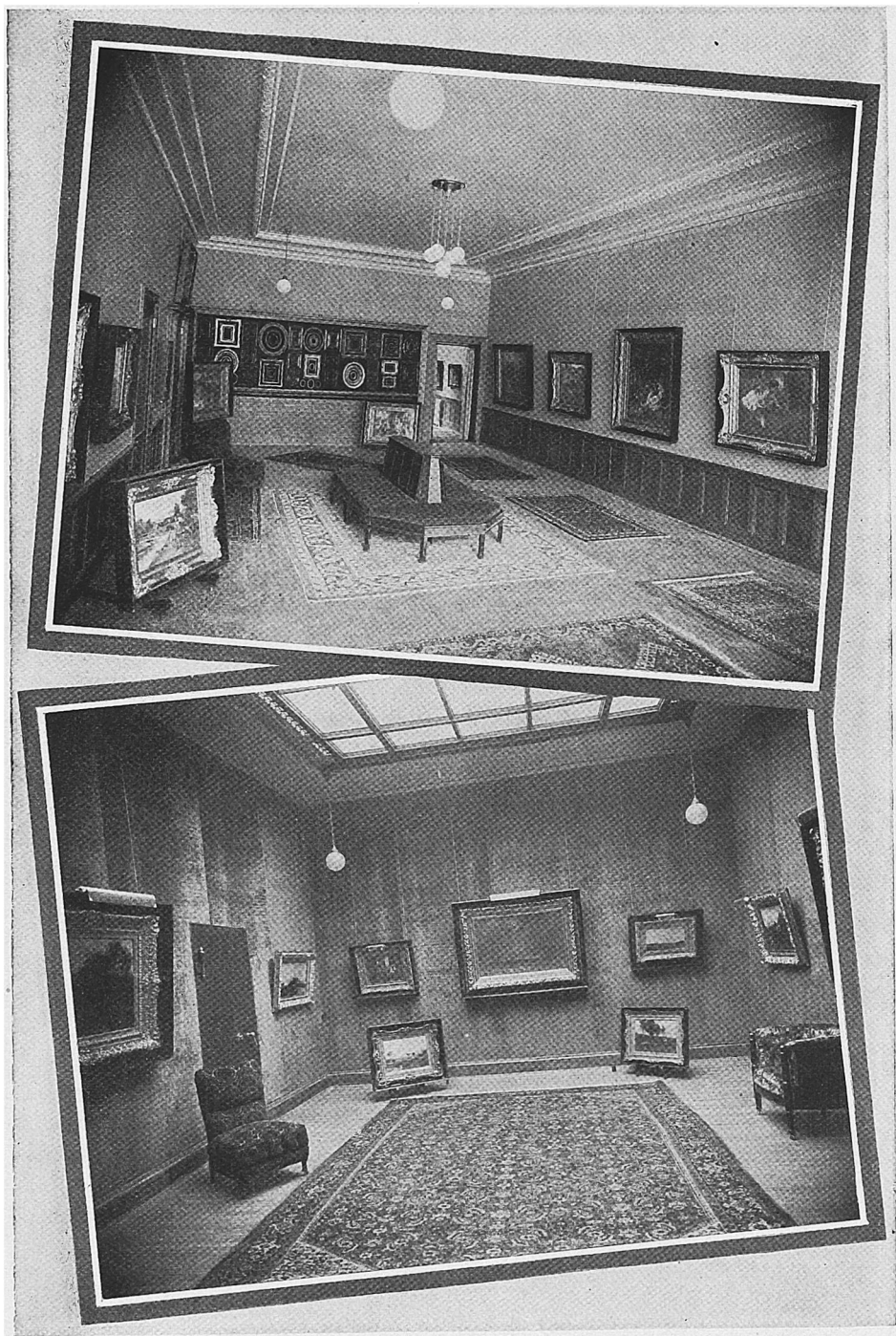
has also the public reception room at the end of the hall, which is hung in chocolate rose velour with oriental rugs and handsome furnishings in rich rose tones. One of the great beauties of these galleries is the abundance of soft, well-directed light from the skylight ceilings. No more admirable or advantageous setting for works of art could be planned or imagined, so perfect is the lighting arrangement.

The beautiful Moran of "The Shoshone Falls," which was displayed in the windows of the Chicago store, is here hung to advantage in the public exhibition room, where it is visible the full length of the hall, and may be appreciated at a proper distance. Looking at this superb scene one can realize why the works of Moran have brought the highest prices ever paid to an American landscape artist during his life.

Moran is, in this respect, more fortunate than is usual with artists, even than such of his talented countrymen as Homer Martin and George Inness. Of the latter it is on record that his "Gray Day," which during his life brought but \$300 some years after his death sold at public auction for \$10,000. Even the brother of the great Moran, Edward, the marine painter, whose splendid series of thirteen paintings of historical events illustrating the development of the United States Navy, has recently attracted so much attention, did not enjoy so full a measure of appreciation during his lifetime. As a tardy recognition of his genius, however, a bill is now pending before both Houses of Congress providing for the purchase of this series for a National Gallery at \$250,000. The beauty and artistic worth of these marine pictures, together with their historical significance, certainly entitles them to a place in the halls of the nation, for Edward Moran excelled in his delineation of the sea in all of its moods, and his incidents are well handled and well chosen. Thomas Moran is likewise famous as a delineator of water, even so famed a critic as John Ruskin having pronounced one of his pictures to be the greatest bit of water drawing he had ever seen by any man.

Moran's studies of the wild scenery of the Rocky Mountain regions are marvelously beautiful and as magnificent in comparison as the scenes which they portray. It seems most appropriate that so great an American should immortalize in art the wonders of our own country. "Shoshone Falls," while on view at the Chicago establishment of Moulton & Ricketts, attracted much attention, and was regarded as one of the most interesting canvases ever brought to this city by all who beheld and enjoyed its majestic beauty.

The Chicago gallery has recently been enlarged and refitted until it is one of the show places of the local art community. Historic interest is added to these art rooms by the fact that they occupy the building which was the original Art Institute with Mr. French at its head some years ago. It would seem that the genius of art hovers about this location consecrating it to her purposes. One of the unique features of these display



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rooms is an inner gallery hung in draped velour wall curtains, a pleasing variation from the usual plain hangings applied flat to the wall.

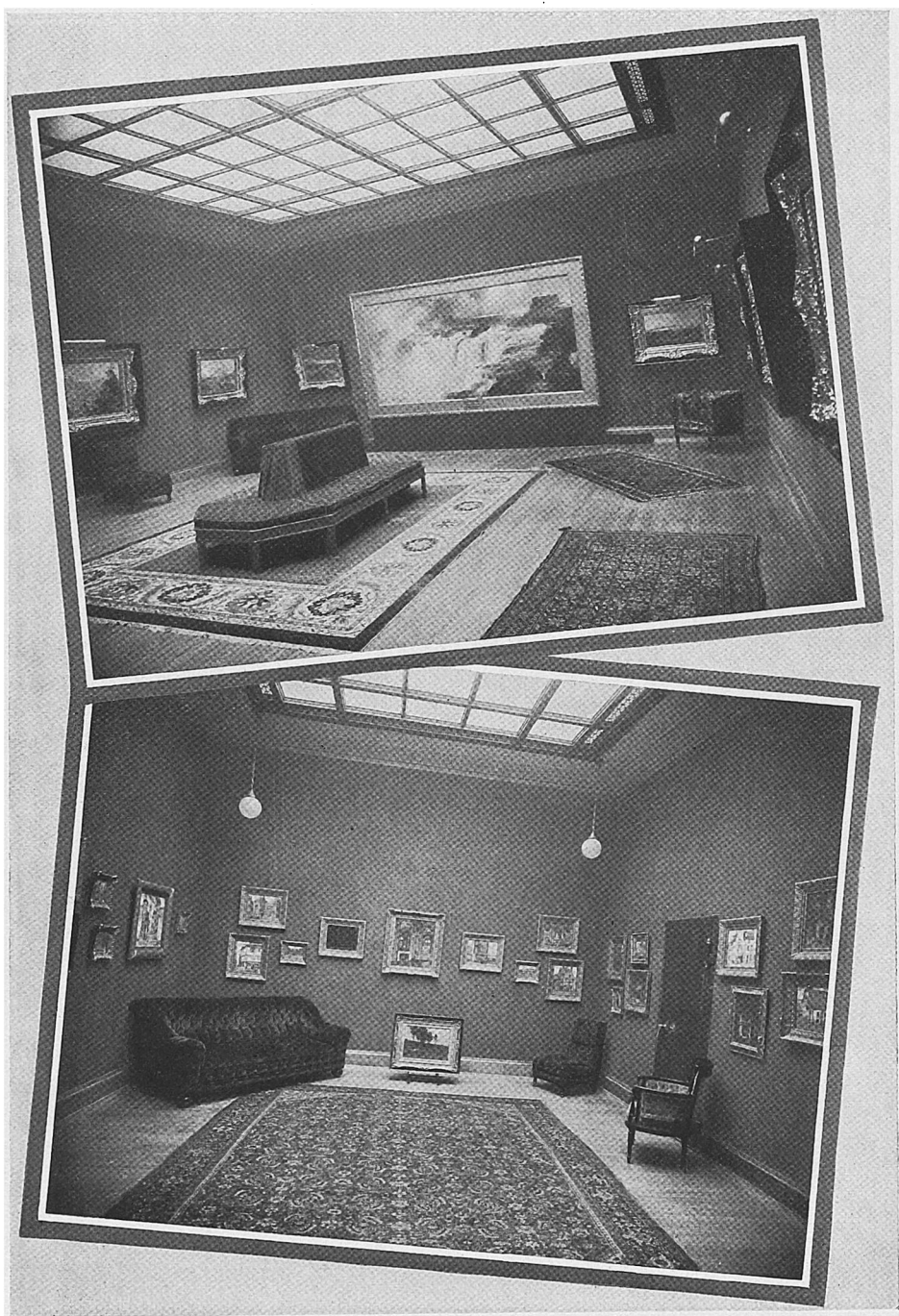
Another new feature in connection with a house handling the highest grade paintings is a framing department recently added and worthy of the establishment in every way. It is an encouraging sign when a representative gallery like Moulton & Ricketts takes up the matter of framing, too long neglected and allowed to fall into the hands of mechanics. It has long been a matter of regret to the discriminating that the art of framing has fallen into disuse and that the taste and care which it received in the days of the Renaissance are no longer lavished upon it. Then every picture had a frame especially designed to set off its charms and enhance its glories; while the large mural paintings were planned to form a consistent decoration harmonious with the architectural features by which they were surrounded. From a decorative standpoint the picture and its frame are inseparable and must be regarded as a unit. The one is incomplete without the other, and the frame should therefore be the complement of the picture in the fullest sense.

Perhaps the most harmonious and beautiful example of fitting framing is to be seen in the old Dutch masters in their settings of carved black wood, which make the best possible foil for the tones of blue, gray, red and brown, which usually characterize these paintings. It might be further observed that these frames also harmonize perfectly with the furnishings of Dutch interiors, a point which should be considered to some degree in the framing of all pictures.

In many instances the frame of a modern painting suits neither the work itself nor the room in which it shall hang, jarring with both impartially. "I firmly believe," says a modern critic, that a good deal of the dislike which the public has for modern painting is due to the abominable frames in which it is presented to them. The art of the furniture maker, the upholsterer and the paper stainer, if often mechanical, has reached a high point of development; that of the frame maker rarely rises above the ideals of the seaside lodging house."

Fortunately, to remedy this state of affairs, American manufacturers of frames have been giving much thought to the subject, and now stand pre-eminent in the field as producers of really artistic wares. These are to be seen in every variety and to the best advantage in the framing room of Moulton & Ricketts galleries, draped in brown velour and finished in oak cases, velvet lined, about three sides of the room, one end of which is occupied by the big display window. Here on the heavy oak tables pictures and frames may be spread out and an appropriate combination secured.

There are many pretty novelties to be seen here which were unobtainable until lately. The many shades and tones of gold, from the palest, through the greenish and rose tinges, to the deepest bronze, the hand-carved frames in gold and natural wood, the designs being in harmony



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with the time and suggestion of the pictures, are among the most attractive. Paneled and mitered frames of natural wood are likewise appropriate for many subjects, and veneered frames, showing the many grains of Circassian walnut and rosewood, are also much used for smaller pictures. Little cheval frames of gilt and fine natural woods are now much in use for photographs, while for miniatures there are small frames of black wood, which enhance their dainty beauty tenfold. No little detail of the art is wanting from the new English mats with fine water color stripings used for metzzo tints to the backgrounds of wood or straw matting employed in the framing of Japanese prints.

Metzzo tints, fine first-print etchings, artists' proofs, water colors and rare prints have been added as a special line to the regular business of the Moulton & Ricketts galleries, which have heretofore dealt in paintings exclusively.

The addition of these departments and the completion of the Milwaukee gallery, pronounced by many experts the finest in this country, marks the high tide to progress in the development of this institution which has for years been so closely identified with the art growth of the community. It is with a sense of satisfaction that a man in his mature years may look back over the progress of his establishment from an early ideal to a final, complete institution, representative among its kind. Art galleries in particular have generally more of ambition and idealism in their history than have purely commercial institutions, for to join hands with art in any capacity ever means a struggle and a sacrifice at first. The man who succeeds as an art dealer could generally have accomplished much more financially with the same ability and less labor in any other more utilitarian line of merchandising, had not the love of art tempted him more than mere prosperity. To the lover of art there is, however, a joy in dealing therein and in fostering the development of that love in the public at large which more than compensates for the early struggles and sacrifices.

Such is the position of the senior member of the firm of Moulton & Ricketts, who, in his maturity, sees the institution stand as the final fruition of the hopes of his earlier years, for Mr. Moulton is one of the oldest dealers in the Western field, and was a lover and collector of pictures long before he adopted this line as a profession. Fortunate, indeed, are the cities who can number among their enterprises art galleries such as these, which are doing so much for the development of true taste and art appreciation.